Applicant(s):   Michael Gauselmann

Assignee: Atronic International GmbH

Title: Free Game Bonus Rounds for Gaming Machines

Serial No.:   10/658,562   Filing Date: September 8, 2003

Examiner: Corbett Coburn   Group Art Unit: 3714

Docket No.:   ATR-A-121-1P   Conf. no: 3426

San Jose, California
October 7, 2008

Mail Stop Appeal Brief
Commissioner for Patents
P. O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

APPEAL BRIEF PURSUANT TO 37 CFR 41.37

Dear Commissioner:

This Appeal is from the examiner's final rejection, dated July 11, 2008. Although it is believed that the rejected claims, as written, are allowable, Applicant's attorney has proposed certain claim limitations at the end of this brief that would be acceptable if the examiner wishes to make an examiner's amendment.

I.   REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

The real party in interest is Atronic International GmbH.

II.   RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

There are no related appeals and interferences.

III.   STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 18, 22, 24, and 59 are pending and have been rejected. The rejection of all Claims 18, 22, 24, and 59 is being appealed.

Claims 1, 6, 11, 12, 16, 17, 19, 21, 37, 38, and 41-58 have been cancelled.

Claims 2-5, 7-10, 13-15, 20, 23, 25-36, 39, and 40 have been withdrawn. (All these withdrawn dependent claims should be made dependent on independent Claim 18 if Claim 18 is found to be allowable.)

IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

All amendments have been entered. There have been no amendments after the final office action.

V. SUMMARY OF CLAIMED SUBJECT MATTER

Claim 18 is the only independent claim. Claim 18 is summarized below followed by an annotated Claim 18.

The focus of the invention in Applicant's Claim 18 is the dynamic funding of a "free game pot," where the pot is common to all the linked gaming machines participating in a free game round (Fig. 3; page 2, lines 9-15; page 7, lines 7-11). All the free games (or bonus games) are funded by the "free game pot" so that the target payout percentage (i.e., long term payout divided by pay-in times 100%) of the slot machines is not affected by the free games (page 7, lines 16-18). The free game pot is funded at dynamically changing levels depending on the level of the free game pot needed to completely fund the free game round (Fig. 3, steps 42-44; page 7, line 12, to page 8, line 9; page 9, lines 1-10). There is no benefit in over-funding the free game pot, since it is not like a progressive jackpot where the ever-increasing progressive jackpot is displayed to all players and draws players to the participating machines. The amount needed in the free game pot to fund a free game round will depend on the number of eligible machines and the total virtual wagers that will be used to play the free games (page 7, line 12, to page 8, line 9).

It is important to realize that there is no technical reason for why the free game pot cannot use a permanently fixed percentage of the wagers to fill it, since over-filling the free game pot is not a technical problem. Any excess money in the free game pot can eventually be used to fund future free game rounds. However, by using Applicant's invention of Claim 18, there is little or no excess money in the free game pot, allowing more of the wagers to fund visible progressive jackpots to draw more players to the games. Applicant's invention makes the most efficient use of the money diverted from the player's wagers by only funding the free game pot to that level necessary to fully fund the free game bonus round, then only allowing the free game bonus round initiation signal to be issued once it is determined that the free game pot can fully fund the free game round.

Claim 18 recites the following. Annotations identifying support in the specification and figures are in brackets.

18. A method performed by a system of linked gaming machines [Fig. 1; page 3, lines 2-5] comprising:

receiving wagers from players playing paid games on the linked gaming machines [Fig. 2, step 21; page 4, lines 1-6;];

detecting a free game bonus round initiation signal by a plurality of the linked gaming machines eligible for playing a free game bonus round [Fig. 2, step 22; page 4, lines 8-11; Fig. 3, step 45; page 9, lines 13-23];

enabling each player of the linked gaming machines that are involved in the free game bonus round to play a plurality of free games [Fig. 2, steps 23-29; page 9, lines 22-23; page 5, lines 12-16];

accumulating an amount in a free game pot, common to the plurality of the linked gaming machines, based at least partially on a percentage of wagers from the paid games on the linked gaming machines, the free game pot for funding the free game bonus round [Fig. 3, step 42; page 6, lines 25-28; page 8, lines 26-30];

granting an award to one or more of the players, based on outcomes of the free games played [Fig. 2, steps 27-29; page 5, line 19, to page 6, line 13]; and

deducting amounts from the free game pot to fund the free games being played [page 7, lines 7-11, 27-29],

wherein accumulating an amount in the free game pot comprises dynamically adjusting the percentage of wagers from the paid games to the free game pot depending on a level of the free game pot, and wherein a percentage of wagers from the paid games when funding the free game pot is less than 100% [Fig. 3, steps 42-44; page 2, lines 9-16; page 9, lines 1-16],

wherein the free game pot is funded by a first percentage of the wagers from the paid games prior to the level of the free game pot reaching a level determined to be necessary to ensure full funding of all free games played during the free game bonus round, wherein the

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free game pot is funded at a second percentage, including zero, lower than the first level after it is determined that the level of the free game pot is sufficient to fund all free games played during the free game bonus round [Fig. 3, steps 42-44; page 2, lines 9-16; page 9, lines 1-16], and

wherein the free game bonus round initiation signal is only issued once it has been determined that the free game pot is at the level determined to be necessary to ensure full funding of all free games played during the free game bonus round [Fig. 3, steps 43-44; page 7, lines 7-11; page 8, lines 28-30; page 9, lines 15-16].

Claim 22 recites:

22.   The method of Claim 18 further comprising filling, with a percentage of the wagers for the paid games, a plurality of pots used for the free game bonus round, the plurality of pots including a jackpot in addition to the free game pot [Fig. 3, steps 41-44; page 8, lines 26-28].

In Claim 22, other pots, including a jackpot, are filled with a percentage of the wagers.

Claim 24 recites:

24.   The method of Claim 22 further comprising dynamically allocating a percentage of the wagers for the paid games to the jackpot and the free game pot depending on the level of the free game pot [Fig. 3, steps 41-44; page 9, lines 1-10, 13-15, 27-30; page 10].

In Claim 24, the percentage of the wagers allocated to the jackpot and the free game pot is dynamically adjusted. In one embodiment, the percentage of wagers allocated to all the pots is fixed, but the allocation to each pot is varied depending on the level of the free game pot. For example, initially the percentage to the free game pot is high to quickly fund it, and after the free game pot reaches a certain level, the percentage to the jackpot is raised and the percentage to the free game pot is reduced. [Page 8, lines 26-28; page 9, lines 1-16.]

Claim 59 recites:

59.   The method of Claim 18 wherein the level of the free game pot determined to be necessary to ensure full funding of all free games played during the free game bonus round is not

predetermined but is dependent upon current conditions while paid games are being played [Page 7, lines 19-26].

In one embodiment of Claim 59, the current bet played by the players of the linked machines is used by the system to determine the necessary level of the free game pot to completely fund the free game round, since the paid bet immediately prior to the free game round is used for each of the games in the free game round. [Page 7, lines 19-26.]

VI. GROUNDS OF REJECTION TO BE REVIEWED ON APPEAL

The ground of rejection to be reviewed on appeal is the rejection of independent Claim 18 and dependent Claims 22, 24, and 59 as being obvious over Bennett (US 6,224,482) in view of a description of a purely mechanical slot machine in a book by Bueschel (*Lemons, Cherries & Bell Fruit Gum*, Royal Bell Books, 1995, page 85), and in view of Acres (US 5,655,961).

VII. ARGUMENT

Rejection of Claim 18 Under 35 USC 103

In the final office action, the examiner rejected independent Claim 18 as being obvious over Bennett (US 6,224,482) in view of a description of a purely mechanical slot machine in a book by Bueschel, and in view of Acres (US 5,655,961). Bennett and Bueschel were previously cited, and the examiner relies upon Acres to teach a computerized jackpot system that does not award a jackpot until the jackpot is full (see middle of page 4 of office action). However, what the examiner is referring to is Acres' bonus pool, which is not a jackpot, and the bonus pool funds an enhanced payout bonus mode of the Acres system, as discussed below. The examiner's repeated insistence in equating a jackpot (Bennett's, Bueschel's, and Acres' jackpots) to Applicant's "free game pot," despite the Applicant previously showing that the "free game pot" does not equate to a jackpot, appears to be a key premise for the examiner's rejection.

The examiner has repeatedly referred to the "free game pot" in Claim 18 as a "jackpot" even though the distinction is very important to the allowability of the claims. Further, the examiner implies that the invention is basically an electronic version of the Bueschel coin diverter, even though an electronic version of Bueschel's coin diverter would have no use in a modern gaming machine that simply counts coins awarded from a single hopper to pay off a jackpot.

As will be described below, it is respectfully submitted that the examiner has not fully considered the differences between Claim 18 and the combination of the prior art, even assuming the Bueschel slot machine were updated with modern electronics and combined with Bennett and Acres. The combination of the prior art is missing a non-obvious key aspect of the invention, described below.

Bennett was cited for teaching a free bonus game that can win a jackpot when the player has achieved a trigger condition. As is conventional, the jackpot is progressive and continues to be accumulated based on a fixed percentage of wagers into all machines that can win the jackpot. Continually increasing a progressive jackpot until won is the essential characteristic of a progressive jackpot. The examiner stated that Bennett does not disclose any dynamic allocation of the percentage of wagers used to fund the progressive jackpot. Note that Bennett's jackpot is an award for a certain game outcome rather than a free game pot used to fund "wagers" for playing free games.

Bueschel describes an early type of mechanical slot machine where a balance mechanism diverts all coins to a single-pay jackpot until the jackpot is full, then diverts all the coins to a different coin receptacle to pay other than the jackpot award. Note that Bueschel's jackpot is an award for a certain game outcome rather than a free game pot used to fund "wagers" for playing free games.

Acres teaches in Fig. 34; col. 36, line 36, to col. 37, line 27; and Claim 8 a system with a bonus pool. The bonus pool accumulates at a fixed percentage. Acres states in col. 36, lines 51-53, "In step 556, the floor controller modifies a bonus pool by a predetermined percentage of all coins played." When the bonus pool achieves a certain predetermined "turn-on" level, and if any other criteria are met (e.g., time of day), the eligible slot machines enter a bonus mode, where the paytable is enhanced. During the bonus mode, any awards above the standard paytable are deducted from the bonus pool. When the bonus pool goes below a "turn-off" level, the bonus mode is terminated to allow the bonus pool to build back up (col. 36, line 61, to col. 37, line 5). Note that Acres' bonus pool augments awards for certain game outcomes rather than acts as a free game pot used to fund "wagers" for playing free games. Further, the bonus pool is accumulated at a fixed rate rate.

The focus of the invention in Applicant's Claim 18 is the dynamic funding of a "free game pot," where the pot is common to all the linked gaming machines participating in the free game round. The free game pot essentially pays the players' wagers for playing the free games so the player does not have to bet her own money for each free game. The free game pot is funded at dynamically changing levels depending on the level of the free game pot needed to completely fund

the free game round. The amount needed in the free game pot to fund a free game round will depend on the number of eligible machines and the total virtual wagers that will be used to play the free games. The advantage of the invention is that there is no wasted excess money in the free game pot that is not being put to use by the casino. For example, a more valuable use of any excess money would be to increase a visible progressive jackpot to draw players to the linked machines.

It is important to realize that there is no technical reason for why the free game pot cannot use a permanently fixed percentage of the wagers to fill it, since over-filling the free game pot is not a technical problem. Any excess money in the free game pot can eventually be used to fund future free game rounds, but the excess money is not being used optimally.

Examiner's Argument

The examiner believes it is immaterial whether a pot is a jackpot (an award for a game outcome) or a free game pot. However, unlike a free game pot used for funding all free games played in a free game bonus round on multiple machines, Bueschel's "full" jackpot is a fixed amount that never changes. It is **forbidden** that the Bueschel jackpot be overfunded since it is intended to be a fixed amount and not a progressive jackpot. A player wins the full jackpot with a certain combination of symbols. When the jackpot is full, Bueschel is then **required** to physically divert all incoming coins to another receptacle since otherwise there would be no money left over to play normal awards. In contrast, in a free game pot, there is no upper limit, so there is no technical requirement to place a cap on it; the free game pot amount is not advertised to the players since it is immaterial to them. Bueschel provides no motivation for dynamically changing the funding of a free game pot.

The purpose for Applicant's invention is to avoid the financially inefficiency in excess funding of the free game pot since that excess money could have been applied elsewhere, such as to a displayed progressive jackpot that draws players to the machines (e.g., Claims 22 and 24). The reason that Bueschel stops funding the fixed jackpot is unrelated to the reason Claim 18 limits the free game pot, so there is no suggestion by Bueschel to dynamically adjust the funding of a free game pot.

Further, Bueschel's concept of quickly filling the jackpot with 100% of all coins bet then adding no more to the jackpot is inapplicable to modern linked gaming machines. Today, a fixed jackpot is simply counted out from a single coin hopper in the slot machine until the amount is paid,

or an attendant is called to pay the jackpot. There is no separate jackpot receptacle requiring dynamic allocation. For linked gaming machines, a jackpot is a progressive jackpot that is continually incremented from a low starting amount until one player of the linked machines wins the progressive jackpot. Therefore, even a modern version of Bueschel's concept (i.e., X% allocation until a jackpot is full, then 0%) has no use in modern slot machines, and one skilled in the art would find nothing useful whatsoever in Bueschel's ancient purely mechanical slot machine.

Therefore, for this additional reason, no modern slot machine designer would consider Bueschel's "dynamic jackpot allocation" to be relevant to modern slot machines, much less relevant to a free game pot.

The free game pot also is not at all like a **progressive** jackpot since, in a progressive jackpot, **any** amount is adequate, from a minimum amount to many millions of dollars, and the casinos like to advertise high progressive jackpots. The casino has no desire to dynamically reduce the percentage of wagers to a progressive jackpot, since high jackpots draw more players to the slot machines. However, for X number of free games for Y machines, the casino must first make sure that the free games are funded, but there is no benefit from overfunding the free game pot. This overfunding consideration is irrelevant to fixed and progressive jackpots and to any game played by a stand-alone machine, since there is no such thing as overfunding a progressive jackpot.

The funding of jackpots (e.g., the Bennett, Bueschel, and Acres pots) is therefore not related to the Claim 18 technique of funding a free game pot.

The appreciation that a free game pot should not be continually funded by wagers is part of the non-obviousness of the invention, and the result of Applicant's invention is that the casinos do not waste financial resources. Instead of overfunding the free game pot, the excess amount may be diverted to a progressive jackpot to draw more players to the machines. The examiner is making Applicant's invention out to be a purely technical achievement (i.e., an electronic improvement over Bueschel's mechanical jackpot allocation technique) without consideration of the unrelated motivations for the Bueschel invention (necessity due to no computer chips back in the early 1900's) and Applicant's invention (increased financial efficiency).

Additionally, Claim 18 requires that the free game pot be adequate to fully fund the free games before the free game bonus round initiation signal is issues. In Bueschel, Bueschel can only

hope that the jackpot is not awarded prior to being at its fixed level. The level of the jackpot has no effect on the outcome of the reels game.

In **Acres**, a bonus mode, funded by an accumulated bonus pool, can only be initiated once the bonus pool has achieved a predetermined "turn-on" level. The bonus pool is accumulated at a constant percentage. This is more fully discussed below regarding Claim 59. Therefore, Acres in combination with the other cited art could not suggest Claim 18.

Rejection of Dependent Claims 22, 24, and 59 Under 35 USC 103

Claims 22 and 24 recite:

22.   The method of Claim 18 further comprising filling, with a percentage of the wagers for the paid games, a plurality of pots used for the free game bonus round, the plurality of pots including a jackpot in addition to the free game pot.

24.   The method of Claim 22 further comprising dynamically allocating a percentage of the wagers for the paid games to the jackpot and the free game pot depending on the level of the free game pot.

Regarding Claim 22, the examiner noted that Bueschel teaches a plurality of pots. These would be the jackpot coin receptacle and the main coin receptacle for normal payouts. However, since Claim 22 recites "the plurality of pots including a jackpot in addition to the free game pot," Bueschel's jackpot could not also be the claimed free game pot. In any event, Claim 22 is described herein only to better understand Claim 24, which is further non-obvious.

The examiner rejected Claim 24 for the same reasons used to reject Claim 18. In Claim 24, the percentage of the wagers to the jackpot and the free game pot are both dynamically adjusted depending on the level of the free game pot. An example would be that the jackpot percentage would be increased once the free game pot has been determined to fully fund the free game bonus round. There is nothing like such multiple pot dynamic funding in the cited art since the only art cited that changes funding levels is when Bueschel stops diverting coins to the jackpot receptacle after the jackpot receptacle is full (presumably determined by its weight controlling the angle of the diverter).

Claim 59 recites:

59.   The method of Claim 18 wherein the level of the free game pot determined to be necessary to ensure full funding of all free games played during the free game bonus round is not predetermined but is dependent upon current conditions while paid games are being played.

In Bueschel, the amount necessary to fill the jackpot is predetermined, in direct contrast to Claim 59. In an embodiment of Claim 59, the amount determined to fully fund the free game bonus round is instantaneously calculated based on the current bets by the active players, since all free games are played with virtual bets equaling the player's prior real bet amount (page 7, lines 19-26).

The examiner cites Acres to support the rejection of Claim 59 by stating,

> Acres teaches that the casino decides the appropriate funding level. Acres also teaches adjusting the frequency of bonus games based on current play conditions.

Acres does not disclose or suggest that the "turn-on level" of the bonus pool "is not predetermined but is dependent upon current conditions while paid games are being played," as recited in Claim 59. In fact, Acres expressly states that the turn-on level is "predetermined" in col. 37, lines 7-14:

> Returning to step 558, if the bonus is currently not active, the floor controller determines at step 562 whether the bonus pool has reached a predetermined turn-on level. This turn-on level can also be set by the casino and provides a buffer above the turn-off level to insure that the bonusing does not behave erratically, i.e., bonusing rapidly switching between on and off. If the bonus pool is not above the turn-on level, bonusing is again turned off in step 552.

Even if the casino determined the turn-on level, it would still be predetermined because the turn-on level is fixed for the next bonus round, once selected, and is not affected by any changing "current conditions while paid games are being played." There would not be any reprogramming of the Acres system with a dynamic allocation algorithm. Further, the bonus pool cannot be equated to a free game pot, as previously described.

Acres also states that, even though the predetermined turn-on level is met, the bonus mode may not begin until other conditions are met such as the time of day, a minimum period of time since the last bonus mode, and a minimum level of play (col. 37, lines 16-21). These extra conditions do not affect the predetermined turn-on level however.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the examiner is using impermissible hindsight in determining that Acres' turn-on level of the bonus mode "is not predetermined but is dependent upon

current conditions while paid games are being played." Therefore, Claim 59 is not suggested by the prior art.

The examiner is invited to proposed claim clarifications. Claim clarifications that may be acceptable include specifically mentioning in Claim 18 that the percentage of wagers allocated to all the pots does not change when the relative allocations to the pots are dynamically changed. This would further distinguish from Bueschel, since Bueschel changes the percentage of wagers from 100% to 0% once the jackpot is full. Also, a claim amendment that would be acceptable would be to specifically claim that the free game pot only pays for all the wagers during the free game round. This would further distinguish from the prior art jackpots, which pay the awards not the wagers.

It is respectfully submitted that all claims are allowable. Should the Board or the examiner have any questions or claim clarifications, please call the undersigned at (408) 382-0480 x202.

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Respectfully submitted,

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VIII. CLAIMS APPENDIX

1.   (cancelled)

2.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 wherein granting an award to the player based on a certain outcome of the free games played comprises granting an award to the player based on an outcome of one or more particular free games.

3.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 wherein granting an award to the player based on a certain outcome of the free games played comprises granting an award to the player based on a display of a particular symbol during one or more of the free games.

4.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 wherein granting an award to the player based on a certain outcome of the free games played comprises granting an award to the player based on a display of a particular symbol across an activated payline during one or more of the free games.

5.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 wherein granting an award to the player comprises granting a jackpot, a portion of a jackpot, a fixed award, a progressive award, or a mystery award to the player.

6.   (cancelled)

7.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 further comprising accumulating winning units from winning outcomes from each free game played, and wherein granting an award to the player comprises granting an award to the player based on accumulated winning units from winning outcomes of free game played.

8.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 7 further comprising detecting a signal that the player has won more winning units during the free game bonus round than other players participating in the free game bonus round and, in response to such detecting, awarding the player an additional award.

9.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 7 wherein the winning units are credits.

10.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 7 wherein the winning units are points.

11.   (cancelled)

12.   (cancelled)

13.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 12 further comprising calculating a level of the free game pot sufficient to pay for all free games played during the free game bonus round.

14.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 13 wherein calculating the level comprises multiplying N by a maximum bet for the first gaming machine.

15.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 13 wherein calculating the level comprises calculating the total amount of virtual wagers that will be bet during the free game bonus round.

16.   (cancelled)

17.   (cancelled)

18.   (rejected) A method performed by a system of linked gaming machines comprising:

receiving wagers from players playing paid games on the linked gaming machines;

detecting a free game bonus round initiation signal by a plurality of the linked gaming machines eligible for playing a free game bonus round;

enabling each player of the linked gaming machines that are involved in the free game bonus round to play a plurality of free games;

accumulating an amount in a free game pot, common to the plurality of the linked gaming machines, based at least partially on a percentage of wagers from the paid games on the linked gaming machines, the free game pot for funding the free game bonus round;

granting an award to one or more of the players, based on outcomes of the free games played; and

deducting amounts from the free game pot to fund the free games being played,

wherein accumulating an amount in the free game pot comprises dynamically adjusting the percentage of wagers from the paid games to the free game pot depending on a level of the free game pot, and wherein a percentage of wagers from the paid games when funding the free game pot is less than 100%,

wherein the free game pot is funded by a first percentage of the wagers from the paid games prior to the level of the free game pot reaching a level determined to be necessary to ensure full funding of all free games played during the free game bonus round, wherein the free game pot is funded at a second percentage, including zero, lower than the first level after it is determined that the level of the free game pot is sufficient to fund all free games played during the free game bonus round, and

wherein the free game bonus round initiation signal is only issued once it has been determined that the free game pot is at the level determined to be necessary to ensure full funding of all free games played during the free game bonus round.

19.   (cancelled)

20.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 11 wherein each free game played is a game played with the player's last wager from the paid games prior to the initiation of the free game bonus round.

21.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 wherein each free game played is a game played with the player's last wager from the paid games prior to the initiation of the free game bonus round.

22.   (rejected) The method of Claim 18 further comprising filling, with a percentage of the wagers for the paid games, a plurality of pots used for the free game bonus round, the plurality of pots including a jackpot in addition to the free game pot.

23.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 22 wherein the plurality of pots further comprises a hidden jackpot for supplying an initial level of the jackpot after the jackpot has been won.

24.   (rejected) The method of Claim 22 further comprising dynamically allocating a percentage of the wagers for the paid games to the jackpot and the free game pot depending on the level of the free game pot.

25.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 further comprising accumulating winning units from winning outcomes of each free game played, and wherein granting an award to the player comprises granting a jackpot based on the number of winning units won during the free game bonus round.

26.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 further comprising accumulating winning units from winning outcomes of each free game played, and wherein granting an award to the player

comprises granting a first bonus amount if a number of winning units won during the free game bonus round exceeds a first level, and granting a second bonus amount if a number of winning units won during the free game bonus round exceeds a second level, higher than the first level.

27.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 further comprising generating the free game bonus round initiation signal based on a random event.

28.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 further comprising generating the free game bonus round initiation signal based on a random time event.

29.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 further comprising generating the free game bonus round initiation signal based on an outcome of the gaming machine.

30.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 further comprising generating the free game bonus round initiation signal based on a predetermined event.

31.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

funding a jackpot from a percentage of wagers from the paid games; and

generating the free game bonus round initiation signal based on the jackpot reaching a certain level.

32.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

funding two or more jackpots from different percentages of wagers from the paid games; and

generating the free game bonus round initiation signal based on any of the jackpots reaching a certain level.

33.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 wherein the paid games comprise spinning reels having symbols, where awards are based on combinations of symbols obtained after the reels stop spinning.

34.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 33 wherein the spinning reels are displayed on a video screen.

35.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 wherein the method further comprises awarding a jackpot based on an outcome of a free game bonus round.

36.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 wherein the method further comprises awarding one of a plurality of jackpots based on an outcome of a free game bonus round.

37.   (cancelled)

38.   (cancelled)

39.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 further comprising accumulating winning units from winning outcomes of each free game played, and wherein granting an award to the player comprises granting a bonus amount, wherein the amount depends on a number of winning units accumulated during the free game bonus round.

40.   (withdrawn) The method of Claim 1 further comprising splitting a jackpot amongst players at the end of the free game bonus round.

41-58. (cancelled)

59.   (rejected) The method of Claim 18 wherein the level of the free game pot determined to be necessary to ensure full funding of all free games played during the free game bonus round is not predetermined but is dependent upon current conditions while paid games are being played.

IX. EVIDENCE APPENDIX

There is no evidence in this appendix.

X.   RELATED PROCEEDINGS APPENDIX

There are no related proceedings in this appendix.